

HISTORY OF MEMPHIS
INTERVIEW WITH
MRS. MOLLIE DARNELL MALLORY

BY - RITA JONES
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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HISTORY OF MEMPHIS
INTERVIEW WITH MOLLIE DARNELL MALLORY
DECEMBER 7, 1984

BY MRS. RITA JONES
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



Memorandum

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Marie Varrell Williams

(INTERVIEWEE)

Kathy Williams

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THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MOLLIE DARNELL MALLORY
THE 1935 COTTON CARNIVAL QUEEN FOR THE HISTORY OF MEMPHIS
CLASS AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY DEC. 7, 1984. THE SUBJECT
OF THIS INTERVIEW IS THE MEMPHIS SOCIETY IN THE 1930's AND
THE COTTON CARNIVAL OF 1935. THE INTERVIEWER IS RITA JONES.

MRS. JONES: Today we are going to talk about Memphis's
Society in the 1930's but especially the
Cotton Carnival of 1935. Can you tell us a little bit about
your early life or your home on Union was it the 19th Century
Club? And - ah - you know about your family.

Mrs. Mallory The home on Union that is now the 19th
Century Club was my grandparents' home - my
father's mother and father. I - but I was born on Union at
1513 Union.

Mrs. Jones Has your family always lived in Memphis?

Mrs. Mallory Yes, both - No, my mother was born in
Memphis and her father came here as a young
man. He was born in Louisville, Kentucky. And here - my
mother's mother came from Mt. Pleasant, Mississippi - and I
don't know how soon they moved to Memphis.

My father was not born in Memphis. He was born in a
little town in Tennessee called Curve. - And the reason it
was called Curve was because the railroad did curve at that
point. He was brought on to Memphis when he was just an
infant. That's when his parents moved to Memphis. They were



in the lumber business and lumber people usually followed the lands that were later cut over lands.

Mrs. Jones Your father died when you were young didn't he?

Mrs. Mallory Yes, he died when I was ten years old. We had moved the summer before to a new house on Goodwin Avenue - out near the country club. And we went to Europe that summer. It was a business trip for my father and we took - my colored nurse with us, she went on all our family's trips. And he died the following spring (pause) which was less than a year after we had moved into that house.

Mrs. Jones And, you had one sister?

Mrs. Mallory One, sister older than I am.

Mrs. Jones And you said - Did your father own any cotton acreage?

Mrs. Mallory No, he was - He was president at the time of the R. J. Darnell Lumber Company. My father's name was Rowland H. Darnell. He was president of the lumber company, and it was hardwood exports business. He owned no cotton lands. I had no connections - real cotton connections.

Mrs. Jones Let's talk a little bit about your debut year 1934.



Mrs. Mallory It was 1933. Ah - A group of my friends wanted to make their debut but my mother said I - She wouldn't let me because it was during the depression. She didn't think it would look good and unless we gave a charity party - which we did. We made all the arrangements with the Peabody Hotel. We sold the tickets and all the proceeds from that ball went to the - ah - Cynthetic Milk Fund which was sponsored by the Press Committee and to the Soup Kitchen which was for the needy people.

Mrs. Jones And did several of your friends -

Mrs. Mallory All of them - the whole group sponsored the Charity Ball. They - we could not have to have our own debut party because of the times. The Memphis Country Club gave the party, the main debut party. Several of the girls did have individual parties and they were absolutely beautiful. There's ah - Imogene Ferguson had her own debut party which was at the Peabody with a really lovely dinner and supper being served at intermission. Octavie Evans and Frances Rice, they were first cousins. They had their debut party, also at the Peabody. Another lovely and beautiful party - Sarah and Blanche Crump, they were twins, they had their debut party at the Memphis Country Club and it was "Winter Wonderland" theme. The decorations were all snow and ice and that kind of thing and those were outstanding parties, but not all of us had individual parties.

Mrs. Jones In 1935, you were chosen to be Queen of the



Cotton Carnival in Memphis, was that night?

Mrs. Mallory Yes, that's night I was probably the first Queen to be chosen who did not have a direct cotton association. So, I dug around and found out that my mother's grandfather on her mother's side was in the cotton business and his name was Rubin Jones and he was part of the firm of Brown & Jones. It was a cotton company.

Mrs. Jones Do you know how the Queens were chosen at that time?

Mrs. Mallory All I know is what I was told. It was a secret committee. But, I was told by Dr. Richman McKinney, who was president of the Country Club. And they called him "King - Maker", but I understand it was a secret committee. But he was the one who came and told me I had been chosen.

Mrs. Jones Mr. Sidney Farnsworth was first chosen to be King of the Cotton Carnival.

Mrs. Mallory That's right, he was going to be King. But, the Saturday, the day before the Cotton Carnival was to start, we were practicing at the Fairgrounds with the Honor Guard when word came to him that his mother had suddenly died. So, he had to step out and they had to make some quick switches and Neely Mallory stepped in. And of course, the different ~~is~~ Neely Mallory was a very big man, Sidney Farnsworth was slight of build and so they had



to change the costumes and make a lot of changes.

Mrs. Jones Tell us about your reign as Queen, some of your duties, and about the costumes and talk about the costumes, who made the lovely costumes that you wore.

Mrs. Mallory Now, that's a good question, they were made, most of them in Hollywood. The Cotton Carnival was still in its infancy and, almost everything was borrowed and M. A. Lightman had her - costumes to come in - had - he brought costumes in from Hollywood. And to, I had two dresses and two mantles from Hollywood. Arthur Halle ordered the dress and I think, I was the first one to have a new dress that wasn't borrowed. It was ordered from New York. It was white satin with - ah - a few rhinestones sprinkled all over it. The dresses from Hollywood, one was a blue with silk, trimmed with silver and I had silver just a silver train with that one. The other I thought was lovely. It was a wine velvet trimmed in cheme colored fur. So, the Cotton Carnival that year lasted - ah - again on Sunday and ended the next Sunday. Probably, the longest of all the Cotton Carnivals. - And I was fortunate I had a few changes of costumes.

Mrs. Jones Yes mami, well did they actually grow cotton in a hot house so that you could have cotton blossoms?



Mrs. Mallory Cotton was grown in hothouses probably with the purpose of using the cotton balls during the Cotton Carnival, but I don't think it was done more than one or two years.

Mrs. Jones The pictures are lovely of your gown and crown and scepter. Can you tell us more about that on the night on the barge when you came up?

Mrs. Mallory We didn't come in at night. This was the last year - the ah - the barge arrived in the daytime. We lifted at the foot - from the foot of Georgia and the barge docked at Jefferson Davis Park. My crown and scepter were borrowed from a former Queen of Comus in New Orleans and it is the prettiest crown and scepter I've ever seen, really beautiful.

Mrs. Jones What was the theme of that year's Carnival, Mrs. Mallory?

Mrs. Mallory The theme of the Carnival was "King Cotton's Dream of Fair Women". That's a very fancy title and I believe the floral parade had depicted famous women.

Mrs. Jones Do you remember any humorous things that happened at the Carnival?

Mrs. Mallory The funniest things that I can remember were done by Scanabea. And we jokingly called



"Society - hab" that was a secret society but it was a spoof.
Every - sh - almost everybody belonged for a dollar. They had
club rooms in the Peabody where you could go between events.



They had all of the entertainers that were in town for the Carnival by at one time or another. First time out they would perform a little bit, and it was just - oh, they didn't have a Queen. You never knew what they were gonna come forth with and the Queen would be in the Masquerade and Mummers Parade which was on Saturday in the daytime, middle of the day. One time it was a monkey, another time it was a horse and they took the horse into the Freebody. Of course, that didn't last long - um - another thing was really funny was the organization started the year before 1934 called the "City-Widens". And it - uh - was - another thing that was just humorous that comes out of something. I - That is serious - I - it all started in a luncheon called the City-Wide Luncheon and all the people and - the girls and boys in the Carnival were sick and tired of sitting doing nothing. So, they started out - just - ah - well, we were City Widens and from then on it became - it was just an organization for fun.

Mrs. Jones Okay - uh - were there very many people waiting when the band came toward you know, Jefferson Davis Park?

Mrs. Mellony Lots of people - uh - The bluffs were crowded with people and all of the - uh - not levees, but anyway the sloping streets down to the Riverside Drive were crowded with people. And there was a parade that went - not one of the big parades but it started there and went



North on Riverside Drive then South on Main Street and ended up on Cotton Exchange.

Mrs. Jones Well, was that when you got to ride in the jewelled carriage?

Mrs. Mallory That's right. And the way I remember the carriage was I think it was gold. It all was probably put together just for the Carnival. Gold carriage with velvet draperies - drapery material hanging down from a jewel - something almost like a crown at the top. It was jewels - large stones.

Mrs. Jones Well, do you think your reign was one of the most elaborate, even though it was during the Depression?

Mrs. Mallory Oh, I think definitely (Laughs) mine was the best. Well, we had two bands playing - Ted Fennarita and Ted Weems and there - it did last longer. And I think - eh - that was the first year of Memphis. First year - not the first year of Memphis. First year they had a Queen. And they had a parade on Thursday night. And I think they borrowed their floats from New Orleans. That night they had their ball. At that time, all the secret societies parties were in the afternoon on Saturday. And Saturday night was turned over to the final parade. That was also the first year Osiris had a Queen. So, I think - I mean it was getting big fast although Carnival was still in its infancy.



Mrs. Jones Well, how would you compare it to the ones today?

Mrs. Mallory I think it was more relaxed. Probably more fun and we didn't have any duties really except be at all the different events and to open and close the Carnival.

Mrs. Jones Do you think the Queens are still selected in the same way?

Mrs. Mallory I really don't know. I don't see how they could be all together. Ah - What - there was really very little expected of me except to give a party. Ah - Sidney Farnsworth and I were going to have our party together. We thought it was fitting. We had invitations that were - made of - the paper was actually made of cotton. And but we didn't, that was cancelled because his mother died that day. But that really was the only thing - Today, I think that there more demands made on the King and Queen.

Mrs. Jones Well, today the Kings seem to be older than the Queens. Were they at that time?

Mrs. Mallory Always were - um - Girls were young but the men were pretty well established in business.

Mrs. Jones In 1935, did they have a Maid of Cotton Pageant?



Mrs. Mallory No, that came later.

Mrs. Jones Tell us a little bit about the blacks in the Carnival. What part did they play?

Mrs. Mallory None.

Mrs. Jones Did they have their own? Had they started the Cotton Makens Jubilee?

Mrs. Mallory No, they didn't even have their own parade as they did later on.

Mrs. Jones Ah- Was the Midway located down on the River at that time?

Mrs. Mallory In 1935 - ah - the Midway, ah - the Royal America Shows were at the Fairgrounds. It was also an electrical pageant at the Fairgrounds. It was - ah - an auto - ah - automobile race. One of the sports' events that was at the Fairgrounds. So, there were a number of things at the Fairgrounds as well as downtown.

Mrs. Jones Your pictures appeared in several of the out-of-state papers. And - ah - It was also - was the Carnival not on the radio - part of it that you -

Mrs. Mallory Well, I guess it was. I haven't thought about it. Well - I don't - Yes, well I guess that - I'm just trying to think. I don't - I just don't know. - don't remember that.



Mrs. Jones Tell us a little bit about Memphis -ah -
Society in the 1930's. You married Mr.
Albert Mallory in 1939.

Mrs. Mallory That's right.

Mrs. Jones And the newspapers are full of clippings
about your engagement and marriage. And I
was especially interested in reading the article describing
the attire worn to your wedding. So, clothes must have
really played an important part in the 30's.

Mrs. Mallory I think the clothes did and all during the
30's the evening dresses and the - ah - even
the dinner dresses were long. And back then we wore hats in
the daytime. Even hats at night unless it was to a party -
gloves. I guess it was important what we wore.

Mrs. Jones Cotton played a big part in the growth of
Memphis but -ah - do you think that the
people connected with cotton made up the society of
Memphis. Because you were not, you know, not directly with
cotton.

Mrs. Mallory Well, Memphis is also -ah - they're -ah -
Memphis is the largest hardwood export -
market in the world. I believe, I have that right. And No,
cotton is of course the main industry but there were many
others.



Mrs. Jones Okay - uh - Mrs. Mallory, tell us a little bit about the race relations. What were the feelings between the whites and blacks in the 30's?

Mrs. Mallory I just - it would be hard to describe now. But it was a wonderful relationship and I don't suppose we'll even have that again. The servants that worked for us we felt very kindly toward. And I think, that they really looked upon us as their family. They looked to us for almost everything and in particular I remember my nurse that was there when I was born. And she stayed with us until she - was desperately ill and left town to be with her daughter. She died in 41. My mother and I went up to see her before she died. She - which was in Chicago and she was in the Cook County Hospital. I'll never forget Mammy. I loved her dearly. She lived in our house and she went on all of our trips with us. And I think we felt very kindly toward all of our servants. It hard to say that now because - we don't have - It's not the same situation at all, can't describe it.

Mrs. Jones Attitudes have - did change but you still feel - you're - don't you feel the people from your generation still feel -

Mrs. Mallory Yes, I think so. And the thing that I think we're going to miss is the humor of the blacks. But they have a humor that is indescribable but we



are going to miss a lot of that now. Because, I think actually what's happen is that it really separated the blacks from the whites.

(pause - Jim Thompson interrupted.)

Mrs. Jones Let's talk a little bit now about your life since 1935. You married Mr. Albert Harris Mallory?

Mrs. Mallory That's right - ah - he's - ah - first cousin to King Neely Mallory and now, his father was in the cotton business. Cotton business has always been very interesting. It's a question of keeping your word and it was all - all done with just a handshake and it broke Albert's father as well as many another man after they. No, nothing on a contract just your good word, ah - anything else about - Oh, his grandfather, my husband's grandfather Captain William Barton Mallory - moved to Memphis from Clarksville, Tennessee. Before that he lived in Virginia. He was in the Confederate War. And, he stood guard at the hanging of John Brown.

Mrs. Jones Now, your home now is where?

Mrs. Mallory On Ellsworth in the Memphis State area.

Mrs. Jones And, you have three children.

Mrs. Mallory I have three children. They're all married. My two girls live out of town. My son is



Albert Mallory. He's really Albert Mallory, III and he was President of the Cotton Carnival a few years ago. I think, it was in 77.

Mrs. Jones Are you still involved with the Cotton Carnival?

Mrs. Mallory No -ah - it's really not much for old Queens to do (laugh). I sell real estate. I am with Coleman-Etter Realtors. I have been with them for seventeen years. And I find it a fascinating exciting business. There's nothing like real estate. They can take an automobile away from you. They can do all kinds of things to you about things you buy - but real estate is a different thing altogether- it's quite fascinating!

Mrs. Jones Do you get a chance to sell any of the old Historic Homes in Memphis?

Mrs. Mallory I'll try to think if I sold any old ones. It is interesting that almost everything I have is in Mid-town. I've sold in other areas all around Memphis and I'll be showing in Germantown and invariably the people I'm working with say "someone told me I ought to show - I ought to look in Mid-town. And so, I end up selling them something in Central Gardens - but I do enjoy the business.

Mrs. Jones Did your husband's family live in the Mallory-Neely home on - x -



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Mrs. Mallory Adams. No, that was originally the Neely home and that is and that was the home of Uncle Lee Mallory wife's family. Now, it was not the Neely home originally. I may be giving you the wrong impression. But it belonged to someone else, but, ah, Miss Daisy lived there almost her entire 98 years. She lived for a very short time somewhere else, right after she married Lee Mallory.

Mrs. Jones Have you visited the Victorian Village, Mrs. Mallory? Have the homes changed?

Mrs. Mallory The ah- Mallory-Neely home has changed very little. I went down there - ah - with some of my grandchildren from out-of-town. I thought it would be interesting for them to see it since it has been opened to the public as the -ah- since it was given to the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution. And it's still furnished in the same manner and I don't believe anything has been changed since Miss Daisy lived there.

Mrs. Jones How about the Fontaine home it's just been -

Mrs. Mallory It's beautiful! To me it is absolutely beautiful, but the furnishings are not typical from what was there originally. I understand this from some people who know -

This concludes the interview with Mrs. Mollie Darnell Mallory.



Mollie Darnell Mallory - 1935 Cotton Carnival Queen







Queen Lollie Barnell
King Neely Mallory



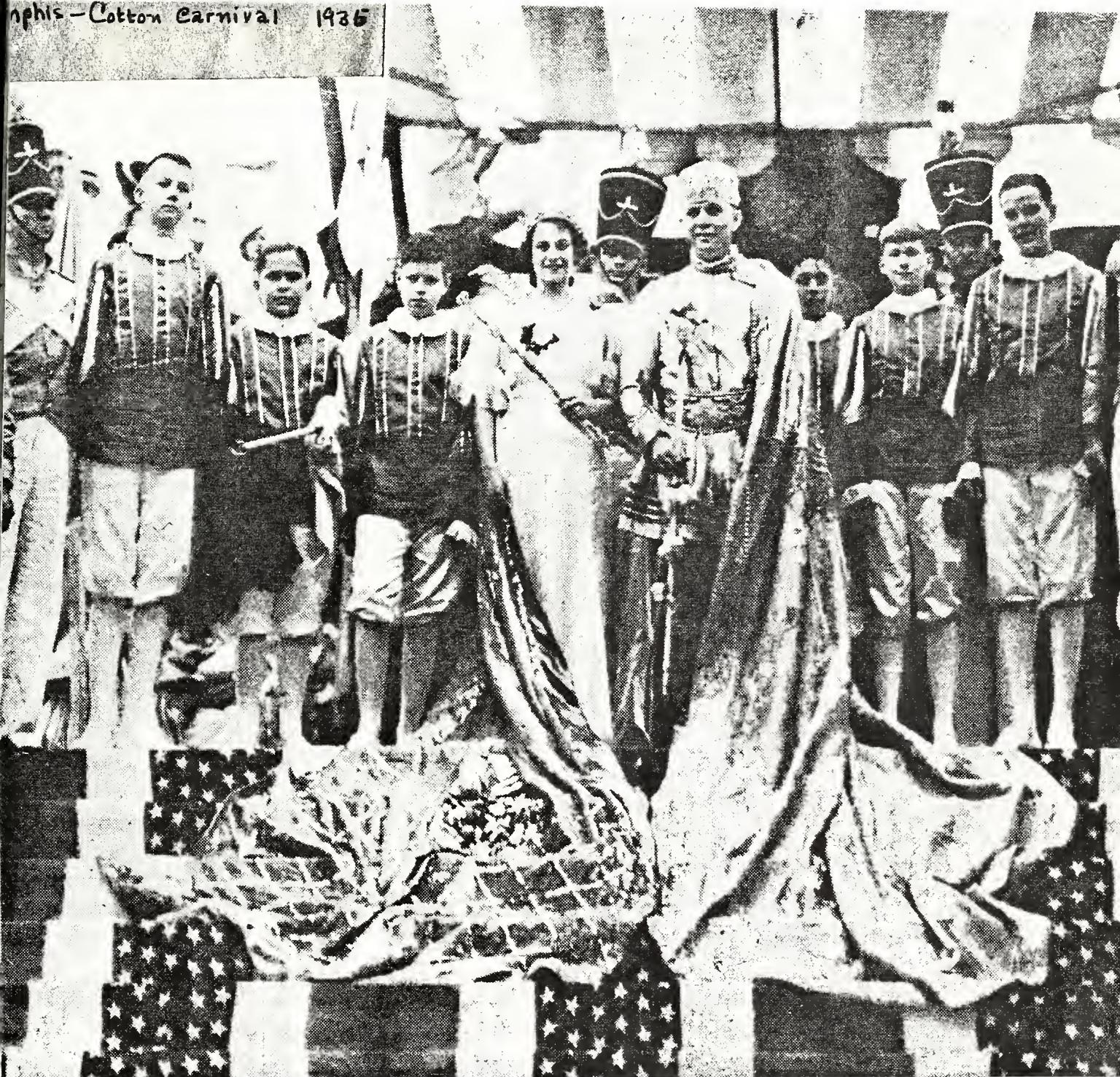
4-14-35

All hail Their Majesties, Miss Mollie Darnell and Mr. Sidney W. Farnsworth. They were chosen yesterday by the secret committee to rule as King and Queen of the fifth Memphis Cotton Carnival, May 6-11. They are shown just after the announcement was made.





Memphis - Cotton Carnival 1936



Press 5-7-35

Their Majesties, The King and Queen of Cotton! Flanked by the Royal Guard and members of their court, King Neely Mallory and Queen Mollie Darnell

landed their Royal Barge at Jefferson Davis Park this morning, and officially took charge of the city's gaiety and fun making for the duration of the Cotton Carnival.

Mayor Watkins Ovkey to the city in a few minutes later.



Portrait Study of Mollie Darnell

Press pic.

10-6 39



MISS MOLLIE DARNELL, whose wedding tomorrow will be one of the outstanding nuptials of the year, is shown above in a portrait study just completed by Dudley Hewitt Fulton. This portrait is one of a series of Cotton Carnival queens being done by the Memphis artist.

Memphis—
Biography
Mallory, Albert Harris











